

A RENAISSANCE MAN WHO WEARING SWEDISH DRESSES¹

The architect behind Stockholm Town Hall, Ragnar Östberg (1866-1945), would have turned 150 years the 14th of July this year. Architect and Post Doc researcher Chiara Monterumisi at École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne has written a thesis about the, not as well-known, gem - Villa Geber.

Born on the *Rindö* island in the Stockholm's archipelago, Östberg has been lifelong fond of the unique natural features of such place, where he kept spending periods of the Nordic summer, to revitalize from the complete absorption in the design processes. Indeed, the conceptualization and the subsequent construction of his masterpiece, the *Stockholm Stadshuset*, extend over a timespan of twenty-two years (1901-1923). However, Östberg was not only the architect of the celebrated Stockholm Town Hall, as the research at the ArkDes has demonstrated in the development of Ph.D. thesis of the author.

He was involved in numerous projects in the first two decades of the XX century, but, unfortunately, only few of them had an international resonance at that time. For instance, the noteworthy *Swedish architecture of the Twenty century* (H. Ahlberg and F.R. Yerbury, 1925) presents three of his projects among which it stands out *villa Geber* (1911-1913), situated in the P. O. Hallman's radial urban plan, the so-called *Diplomatstaden* along the *Djurgård* canal.

The Swedish architect-historian Ahlberg defined it as a “pearl of Swedish modern domestic architecture”, manifesting more than a fascination with a unique example of courtyard house in the Nordic panorama. This project clearly condenses conspicuous sources of inspiration derived from his 3-year journey around Europe being, as E. Cornell (*Ragnar Östberg. Svensk arkitekt*, 1965) suggests, a picturesque balance between Venetian palaces and Swedish medieval manor houses.

The ArkDes is custodian of a valuable material never examined so far, which is a pivotal point for widening the critical panorama on the Swedish architect. The author's forthcoming book “*Ragnar Östberg. Villa Geber, a home in forma urbis along the archipelago* (Edibus, 2016)-funded by the *Italienska Kulturinstitutet i Stockholm* - celebrates the 150th anniversary of the leading exponent of the National Romanticism, literally a “renaissance” of Swedish character and tradition.

¹ AHLBERG, Hakon (1965). “Ragnar Östberg på avstånd”. *Arkitektur*, No. 7, p. 235